Institutional Betrayal and Institutional Courage

Jennifer J. Freyd, PhD

Professor Emerit of Psychology, University of Oregon

Founder and President, Center for Institutional Courage

Institutional Betrayal

The term *institutional betrayal* refers to wrongdoings perpetrated by an institution upon individuals dependent on that institution, including failure to prevent or respond supportively to wrongdoings by individuals (e.g. sexual assault) committed within the context of the institution. The term "Institutional Betrayal" as connected with betrayal trauma theory was introduced in presentations by Freyd in early 2008 and is discussed in more detail in various publications, including in a section starting on page 201 of Platt, Barton, & Freyd (2009) and in a 2013 research report (Smith & Freyd, 2013). Institutional betrayal is a core focus of the book *Blind to Betrayal*, by Freyd and Birrell, 2013. Currently the most definitive exploration of institutional betrayal is presented in the *American Psychologist* (Smith & Freyd, 2014). Also see Freyd, 2018 and Smidt & Freyd, 2018.

Institutional betrayal harms in at least two distinct ways: pragmatic and psychological. For instance, damage to citizens from avoidable government failure in managing covid19 is both pragmatic (illness, deaths, increased inequality, economic ruin) and psychological (leading to emotional and physical distress and thus more pragmatic harm).

What is Institutional Betrayal?
Institutions harming those dependent on the institution. *Includes the failure to prevent or respond supportively to wrongdoings within the institution when there is a reasonable expectation of protection.* *The harm of institutional betrayal is both pragmatic and psychological.*

Institutional DARVO occurs when DARVO (Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim & Offender) is committed by an institution (or with institutional complicity) as when police charge rape victims with lying. Institutional DARVO is a particularly aggressive form of institutional betrayal. Also see Fitzgerald & Freyd, 2017.

South Park 90-second DARVO Explainer, 7 November 2019

Institutional Courage

What is Institutional Courage? *It is an institution's commitment to seek the truth and engage in moral action, despite unpleasantness, risk, and short-term cost. It is a pledge to protect and care for those who depend on*

the institution. It is a compass oriented to the common good of individuals, the institution, and the world. It is a force that transforms institutions into more accountable, equitable, healthy places for everyone. From the Center for Institutional Courage.

History: *Institutional Courage* is the term Freyd, 2014 introduced as the antidote to institutional betrayal. It includes institutional accountability and transparency, as when institutions conduct anonymous surveys of victimization within the institution: "Enabling the methodical collection of data — and encouraging their transparent distribution and study — will signal to campus communities across the country that institutional betrayal can be replaced by institutional courage." (Freyd, 2014). For more on institutional courage including specific steps to take, see Freyd, 2018 and Freyd & Smidt, 2019. Freyd is the Founder and President of the Center for Institutional Courage.

Research and Publications

Links to some of our Institutional Betrayal projects. A more complete list of publications from our lab is here.

Also see Tracking Research: Comprehensive Database of Studies on Institutional Betrayal and Courage maintained by The Center for Institutional Courage.

Institutional Betrayal Theory 	Smith, C.P. & Freyd, J.J. (2014). Institutional betrayal. *American Psychologist*, **69**, 575-587. Freyd, J.J. (2018). When sexual assault victims speak out, their institutions often betray them, *The Conversation*, 11 January 2018. (Republished in LA Times, Chicago Tribune, AP, and many others.) NEW! Christl ME, Pham KT, Rosenthal A, DePrince AP. (2024). When Institutions Harm Those Who Depend on Them: A Scoping Review of Institutional Betrayal. *Trauma, Violence, Abuse*, , doi: 10.1177/15248380241226627. Epub ahead of print. Also see Tracking Research: Comprehensive Database of Studies on Institutional Betrayal and Courage maintained by The Center for Institutional Courage.

Center For Institutional Courage™

Center for Institutional Courage, Inc

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Freyd launches the Center for Institutional Courage by Jenee Wilde, *Center for the Study of Women in Society News,* 6 May 2020.

Covid19 and Institutional Betrayal

Adams-Clark, A.A. & Freyd, J.J. (2021). COVID-19-related institutional betrayal associated with trauma symptoms among undergraduate students. *PLoS ONE*, 16(10): e0258294.

There's a name for Trump playing down the threat and failing to take action against the virus: Institutional betrayal, by Anne DePrince and Joan Cook, *The Conversation*, 25 March 2020.

Klest, B., Smith, C. P., May, C., McCall-Hosenfeld, J., & Tamaian, A. (2020). COVID-19 has united patients and providers against institutional betrayal in health care: A battle to be heard, believed, and protected. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy.*

For more about the relationship between the USA's avoidable COVID surge mid-summer 2020 and what we know about institutional betrayal see our ISSUE #2 of the Courage Brief

Police Brutality,

Judicial Betrayal,

and Government Betrayal

Gomez, J.M. & Freyd, J.J. (2014). Institutional betrayal makes violence more toxic. *The Register-Guard* (Eugene, Oregon), August 22, 2014, p A9.

McAuliffe, M. (2018). *Officer Use of Force: A Multicase Study of Institutional Betrayal*

Smidt, A.M. & Freyd, J.J. (2018). Government Mandated Institutional Betrayal *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, **19,** 491-499.

Smith, C.P, Gómez, J. M., & Freyd, J. J. (2014). The Psychology of Judicial Betrayal. *Roger Williams University Law Review,* **19**, 451-475.

Institutional Courage Theory and Research

Freyd, J.J. (2018). When sexual assault victims speak out, their institutions often betray them, *The Conversation*, 11 January 2018. (Republished by Salon, LA Times, Chicago Tribune, AP, and others.)

> *The details of institutional courage depend to some extent on the type of institution involved, but there are 10 general principles that can apply across most institutions.*(Continue Reading for the 10 Steps)

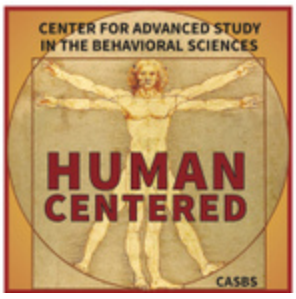
Freyd, J.J. (2014). Official campus statistics for sexual violence mislead. [Op-Ed] *Al Jazeera America*, July 14, 2014. (This op-ed introduced institutional courage.)

Freyd, J.J. & Smidt, A.M. (2019). So You Want to Address Sexual Harassment and Assault in Your Organization? Training is Not Enough; Education is Necessary [Editorial]. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, **20,** 489-494.

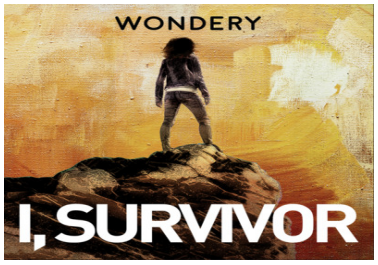
Smidt, A.M., Adams-Clark, A.A., & Freyd, J.J. (2023). Institutional courage buffers against institutional betrayal, protects employee health, and fosters organizational commitment following workplace sexual harassment, *PLOS ONE* 18(1): e0278830. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278830

Also see Tracking Research: Comprehensive Database of Studies on Institutional Betrayal & Courage maintained by The Center for Institutional Courage.

Podcast: Sexual Violence & Institutional Courage



Listen to **Podcast: Sexual Violence & Institutional Courage - Jennifer Freyd**: Host John Markoff speaks with Dr. Freyd about her career of groundbreaking research, from developing betrayal trauma theory to current work supporting institutional courage.

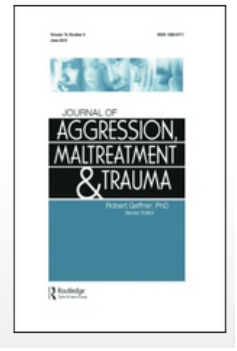
Symposium on Betrayal and Courage in the Age of #MeToo 	Video of symposium here **Betrayal and Courage in the Age of #MeToo**, CASBS Symposium, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 12 February 2019.
Mini-documentary about Sexual Harassament and Institutional Betrayal 	**Watch** the 8 minute *Washington Post* mini-documentary: Hollywood's greatest betrayal: How sexual predators used their power to operate in plain sight
Podcast about Institutional Betrayal 	Listen Podcast (15 min) Podcast: Institutional Betrayal with Dr. Jennifer Freyd by *I, Survivor Podcast*, Art19, 5 October 2018.
Sexual Harassment and Institutional Betrayal 	Freyd, J.J. (2017, June). Sexual Harassment: Moving from Institutional Betrayal to Institutional Courage. Invited presentation to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, Workshop on Impact of Sexual Harassment in Academia, Irvine, California, 20 June 2017. (Video is available here; Freyd presentations starts at 1:57:00) Rosenthal, M.N., Smidt, A.M., & Freyd, J.J. (2016). Still second class: Sexual harassment of graduate students. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 40, 364-377. • Associated short article: Sexual harassment compromises graduate students' safety by Marina Rosenthal,

	Alec Smidt, and Jennifer Freyd, *The Conversation*, 18 May 2016.
Institutional Betrayal and Betrayal Blindness 	Freyd, J.J.& Birrell, P.J. (2013). *Blind to Betrayal.* John Wiley & Sons. • Press release for Freyd & Birrell (2013)
The High School Experience 2019 version of 3-min thesis	Open Access Publication: Lind, M., Adams-Clark, A.A., & Freyd, J.J. (2020). Isn't high school bad enough already? Rates of gender harassment and institutional betrayal in high school and their association with trauma-related symptoms. *PLOS One,* 15(8): e0237713. **Watch** Monika Lind's award-winning 3 Minute Thesis (2020 version)
The College Experience: Dangerous Safe Havens 	Smith, C.P. & Freyd, J.J. (2013). Dangerous Safe Havens: Institutional Betrayal Exacerbates Sexual Trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 26, 119-124. • Press release for Smith & Freyd (2013) Smith, C. P., & Freyd, J.J. (2017). Insult, then injury: Interpersonal and institutional betrayal linked to health and dissociation. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, & Trauma,* 26, 1117-1131,

Campus Sexual Violence and Institutional Betrayal Surveys 	The UO Sexual Violence and Institutional Betrayal Campus Surveys: 2014 and 2015 The Science of Campus Victimization and Climate Surveys Freyd, J.J. (2014). Official campus statistics for sexual violence mislead. *Al Jazeera America*, July 14, 2014. Freyd, J.J. (2014) Use science as tool on campus sexual assault. *The Register-Guard* (Eugene, Oregon), November 9, 2014, p H4.
Compelled Disclosure, Compelled Betrayal 	The Problem with "Required Reporting" Rules for Sexual Violence on Campus by Jennifer Freyd, *Huffington Post Blog*, 25 April 2016. Holland, K. J., Cortina, L. M., & Freyd, J. J. (2018). Compelled Disclosure of College Sexual Assault. *American Psychologist*. 73(3), 256-268. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000186 Compelled Disclosure -- The Problem with "Required Reporting" of Sexual Violence on College Campuses -- Resources and Information
 Institutional Betrayal in Medicine	Smith, 2015, *First do not harm: Institutional betrayal in health care.* Smith doctoral dissertation, 2015. • [Smith dissertation published as: Smith, C. P. (2017). First, do no harm: Institutional betrayal and trust in healthcare organizations. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Healthcare.*] Tamaian, Klest & Mutschler (2016) Patient dissatisfaction and institutional betrayal in the Canadian medical system: A qualitative study First-of-its-kind study examines 'institutional betrayal by CTVNews.ca Staff, CTV News, 6 January 2018. Klest, B., Smith, C. P., May, C., McCall-Hosenfeld, J., & Tamaian, A. (2020). COVID-19 has united patients and providers against

	institutional betrayal in health care: A battle to be heard, believed, and protected. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy.*
 Institutional Betrayal in the Military	Reinhardt, K. M., Smith, C. P., & Freyd, J. J. (2016). Came to serve, left betrayed; MST and the trauma of betrayal. In L. S. Katz (Ed.), *Understanding and treating military sexual trauma* (pp. 61-78). New York: Springer. Monteith, L. L., Bahraini, N. H., Matarazzo, B. B., Soberay, K. A., & Smith, C. P. (2016). Perceptions of Institutional Betrayal Predict Suicidal Self-Directed Violence Among Veterans Exposed to Military Sexual Trauma. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 72, 743–755. Andresen, F. J., Monteith, L. L., Kugler, J., Cruz, R. A., & Blais, R. K. (2019). Institutional betrayal following military sexual trauma is associated with more severe depression and specific posttraumatic stress disorder symptom clusters. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 75(7), 1305-1319. Holliday, R. & Monteith, L.L. (2019). Seeking help for the health sequelae of military sexual trauma: A theory-driven model of the role of institutional betrayal. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, 20(3), 340-356. Monteith, L. L., Holliday, R., Schneider, A. L., Miller, C. N., Bahraini, N. H., & Forster, J. E. (2021). Institutional betrayal and help-seeking among women survivors of military sexual trauma. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 13*(7), 814–823.
Institutional Betrayal in the Church	Cook, J.M. & Freyd, J.J. (2019). Why victims of Catholic priests need to hear more than confessions, *The Conversation*, 16 January 2019.

Psychologists, Torture, & Institutional Betrayal 	Gomez, J.M., Smith, C.P, Gobin, R.L., Tang, S.S., & Freyd, J.J. (2016). Collusion, Torture, and Inequality: Understanding the Actions of the American Psychological Association as Institutional Betrayal [Editorial]. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation*, **17,** 527–544. Tang, S.S. (2015). Blindness to institutional betrayal by the APA. [Letter]. *BMJ*, 351, h4172. Gómez, J. M. (2015, August 6). Psychological Pressure: Did the APA commit institutional betrayal? [OpEd]. *Eugene Weekly*. Freyd JJ. (2009). Rules of conscience: betray ethics, betray trust [letter]. *BMJ* 338, b2191.
Racial Discrimination & Institutional Betrayal 	Gomez, J.M. & Freyd, J.J. (2014). Institutional betrayal makes violence more toxic. *The Register-Guard*, August 22, 2014, Gómez, J. M. (2015). Microaggressions and the enduring mental health disparity: Black Americans at risk for institutional betrayal. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 41(2), 121–143. Gomez, J. M., & Freyd, J. J. (2018). Psychological outcomes of within-group sexual violence: Evidence of cultural betrayal. *Journal of Immigrant & Minority Health,* **20,** *1458-1467.* Cromer, L.D., Vasquez, L., Gray, M.E., Freyd, J.J. (2018). The Relationship of Acculturation to Historical Loss Awareness, Institutional Betrayal, and the Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma in the American Indian Experience. *Journal of Cross Cultural Psychology*, **49,** 99–114. Gomez, J.M, Freyd, J.J., Delva, J, Tracy, B., Mackenzie, L.N., Ray, V., & Weathington, B. (2023). Institutional Courage in Action: Racism, Sexual Violence, and Concrete Institutional Change [Editorial]. *Journal of Trauma & Dissociation,* **24**, 157-170, DOI: 10.1080/15299732.2023.2168245
Sexual Orientation & Institutional Betrayal 	Smith, C.P., Cunningham, S., & Freyd, J.J. (2016). Sexual Violence, Institutional Betrayal, and Psychological Outcomes for LGB College Students. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science,* **2**, 351-360. Smidt, A.M., Rosenthal, M.N., Smith, C.P., & Freyd, J.J. (2021). Out and in Harm's Way: Sexual Minority Students' Psychological and Physical Health After Institutional Betrayal and Sexual Assault. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse,*

	30, 41-55, DOI: 10.1080/10538712.2019.1581867.
Conference on: **Institutional Betrayal: Inequity, Discrimination, Bullying, and Retaliation in Academia** mounthood1 (2)	The Pacific Sociological Association's 88th Annual Meeting/Conference **Institutional Betrayal: Inequity, Discrimination, Bullying, and Retaliation in Academia** At the Hilton Portland & Executive Tower, **Portland, Oregon** **Thursday, April 6 to Sunday, April 9 2017** Preliminary Full Schedule Schedule of Freyd Dynamic Lab Presentations
Journal Special Issue: Institutional Betrayal  & Betrayal Trauma	*Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, & Trauma* -- Special Issue: **Institutional Betrayal & Betrayal Trauma**, Volume 26, 2017
Additional Instituitional Betrayal Research by Others	Ahern, K. (2018). Institutional Betrayal and Gaslighting: Why Whistle-Blowers Are So Traumatized, *The Journal of Perinatal & Neonatal Nursing.* Volume 32 - Issue 1 - p 59–65. doi: 10.1097/JPN.0000000000000306. Chris Linder & Jess S. Myers (2018) Institutional Betrayal as a Motivator for Campus Sexual Assault Activism, *NASPA Journal About Women in Higher Education*, 11:1, 1-16, DOI: 10.1080/19407882.2017.1385489. Pyke, K.D. (2018). Institutional Betrayal: Inequity, Discrimination, Bullying, and Retaliation in Academia *Sociological Perspectives*, Vol. 61(1) 5–13. DOI: 10.1177/0731121417743816.

Betrayal Blindness

Betrayal blindness is the unawareness, not-knowing, and forgetting exhibited by people towards betrayal. The term "betrayal blindness" was introduced by Freyd (1996), and expanded in Freyd (1999) and Freyd and Birrell (2013) in the context of Betrayal Trauma Theory. This blindness may extend to betrayals that are not traditionally considered "traumas," such as adultery, and also to institutional betrayal. Victims, perpetrators, and witnesses may display betrayal blindness in order to preserve relationships, institutions, and social systems upon which they depend. (Also, see Eileen Zurbriggen's essay on Betrayal Trauma in the 2004 Election.)

DARVO

Institutional denial plays a crucial role in institutional betrayal. One particularly pernicious form of denial is *DARVO* -- Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim and Offender (see p 119 of *Blind to Betraya*l; also see this web page about DARVO). Institutional retaliation toward whistle blowers often follows a DARVO pattern. (Although retaliation is a significant problem, victims should know that there are many laws that are designed to protect employees from retaliation.)

Institutional Courage

NEW EPISODE
"We need trustworthy institutions so we can repair so many of our social ails. We get hurt from the betrayal and we could profit, in important ways, from courage."
Dr. Jennifer Joy Freyd
@RetaliationPod

Above: Listen to Jennifer Joy Freyd on Retaliation with Julie Roginsky, *Apple Podcasts.*

Institutional betrayal can be replaced by institutional courage (Freyd, 2014). Courageous institutions refrain from punishing the whistleblower. Rather, cherishing the whistleblower is what a courageous -- and wise -- institution does (see p 173 of *Blind to Betraya*l, Freyd & Birrell, 2013) A remarkable example of institutional courage occurred when Oregon State University hired Brenda Tracy, a survivor of rape who had initially been betrayed by the institution:

> *After Tracy came forward, Oregon State issued a public apology for how it had responded to her report more than a decade earlier. And then the school hired her to be a consultant on how it*

should handle sexual assault. Rather than freezing out the whistleblower, OSU regularly brings Tracy in to speak to classes, sports teams and members of Greek life about sexual violence. (Kingkade, 2016)

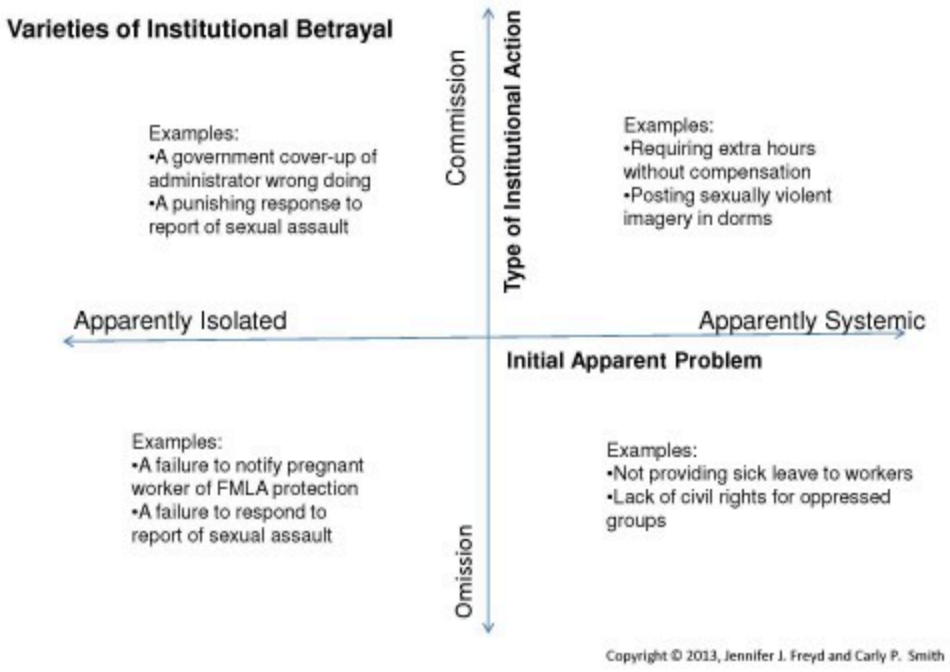
(Also #institutionalcourage)

Media Coverage

Recent and Upcoming Lectures and Presentations

Varieties of Institutional Betrayal

Institutional betrayal can take many forms. Some situations may appear to be easily identified as involving institutional betrayal whereas others may be less obvious at first glance, but still constituting institutional betrayal. This graph is intended to convey the role of two dimensions of institutional betrayal that may impact how easy it is to identify the role of the institution. Note that although less obvious perhaps, institutional betrayal can be at the center of events that seem to be isolated when those events happen in an institutional context and similarly it can be responsible for harmful acts of omission.


Varieties of Institutional Betrayal
Examples:
•A government cover-up of administrator wrong doing
•A punishing response to report of sexual assault
Commission
Type of Institutional Action
Examples:
•Requiring extra hours without compensation
•Posting sexually violent imagery in dorms
Apparently Isolated
Apparently Systemic
Initial Apparent Problem
Examples:
•A failure to notify pregnant worker of FMLA protection
•A failure to respond to report of sexual assault
Omission
Examples:
•Not providing sick leave to workers
•Lack of civil rights for oppressed groups
Copyright © 2013, Jennifer J. Freyd and Carly P. Smith

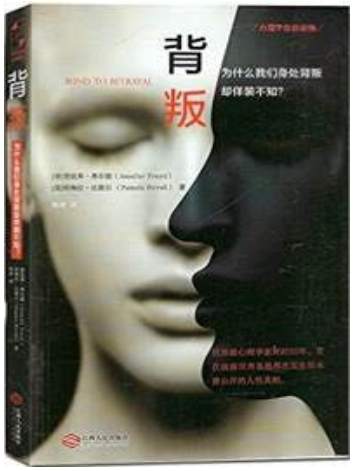
History of the term *Institutional Betrayal* in context of Betrayal Trauma Theory

- Freyd, J.J. (March, 2008). The Psychology of Betrayal Trauma: Memory, Health, and Gender. Lecture, Thompson Hall Science and Mathematics Seminar, University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington, 6 March 2008.
- Freyd, J.J. (April, 2008). Betrayal Trauma: Memory, Health, and Gender. Colloquium, Department of Psychology, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM, 11 April 2008.
- Platt, M., Barton, J., & Freyd, J.J. (2009). A betrayal trauma perspective on domestic violence. In E. Stark & E. S. Buzawa (Eds.) *Violence against Women in Families and Relationships* (Vol. 1, pp. 185-207). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Institutional Courage is the term Freyd, 2014 introduced as the antidote to institutional betrayal. It includes institutional accountability and transparency, as when institutions conduct anonymous surveys of victimization within the institution: "Enabling the methodical collection of data — and encouraging their transparent distribution and study — will signal to campus communities across the country that institutional betrayal can be replaced by institutional courage." (Freyd, 2014). For more on institutional courage including specific steps to take, see Freyd, 2018 and Freyd & Smidt, 2019. Freyd is the Director of the Project on Institutional Courage.

Some Key Writings

- Smith, C.P. & Freyd, J.J. (2013). Dangerous Safe Havens: Institutional Betrayal Exacerbates Sexual Trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 26, 119-124.
- Freyd, J.J.& Birrell, P.J. (2013). *Blind to Betrayal.* John Wiley & Sons.
- Smith, C.P. & Freyd, J.J. (2014). Institutional betrayal. *American Psychologist*, 69, 575-587.
- Freyd, J.J. (2018). When sexual assault victims speak out, their institutions often betray them, *The Conversation*, 11 January 2018. (Republished in LA Times, Chicago Tribune, AP, and many others.)
- More



One of the translations of *Blind to Betrayal*

Measurement Instruments:

Institutional Betrayal Questionnaire (IBQ), IBSQ, & IBQ-H

Carly Smith and Jennifer Freyd have been developing the Institutional Betrayal Questionnaire (IBQ) to measure institutional betrayal regarding sexual assault. The IBQ is designed to measure institutional betrayal that occurs leading up to or following a sexual assault (e.g., [The institution] "... created an environment where sexual assault seemed like no big deal"; "... responded inadequately to reports of sexual assault"). The IBQ also measures identification with the institution and prompts for a description of the institution involved. There is now an IBQ-2, one that includes support items, and one that focusses on health care. The full IBQ (IBQ-2, IBSQ, and IBQ-H) can be found here.

The Institutional Courage Questionnaire (ICQ), ICQ-Individual, & ICQ-Climate

Alec Smidt and Jennifer Freyd have been developing the The Institutional Courage Questionnaire (ICQ). The ICQ can be found here.

Also see:

- DARVO
- Tips: Be a Good Listener
- The UO Sexual Violence and Institutional Behavior Campus Survey

- Institutional Betrayal Questionnaire (IBQ)
- Brief Betrayal Trauma Survey (BBTS)
- Full-text articles on betrayal and trauma
- Short reports of betrayal research
- Freyd Dynamics Lab

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Last update 10-Mar-2024 , jjf@uoregon.edu
Please note: Due to the large volume of correspondence I receive, I cannot answer most messages.
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